SonicCell

Expandable Synthesizer Module and Audio Interface

Using SonicCell with Ableton Live™

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SCWS07

About the Workshop Booklets

Roland's SonicCell is designed for modern musicians. Using USB, It adds a huge set of sounds to your digital audio workstation (or "DAW") without adding to your computer's workload. It's also an audio interface that can get signals from mics, instruments, or other devices to DAW tracks for recording. SonicCell's Editor software allows you to program SonicCell from within your DAW. Onstage, its compact size also makes SonicCell the ideal companion for a laptop DAW, letting you perform and sing along with recorded tracks. Or use it to play back sequences and audio files from a USB memory stick.

Each SonicCell Workshop booklet focuses on one SonicCell topic, and is intended as a companion to the *SonicCell Owner's Manual*. This booklet requires SonicCell O.S. Version 1.11 or higher. You can download the latest SonicCell O.S. for free from *www.RolandUS.com*.

About This Booklet

This booklet explains using SonicCell with Ableton Live. First we'll discuss sequencing MIDI tracks in Live using SonicCell's synth sounds. Then we'll talk about using SonicCell as as an audio interface for recording live audio and SonicCell sounds as audio tracks in Live.

We'll assume you've installed and know how to operate Live—otherwise, consult Live's built-in documentation in its Help menu. We'll also assume you've read the *Using SonicCell with a DAW* and *Using SonicCell as an Audio Interface* Workshop booklets, that SonicCell and your computer are hooked up and turned on, and that you're listening through SonicCell.

Understanding the Symbols in This Booklet

Throughout this booklet, you'll come across information that deserves special attention—that's the reason it's labeled with one of the following symbols.

A note is something that adds information about the topic at hand.

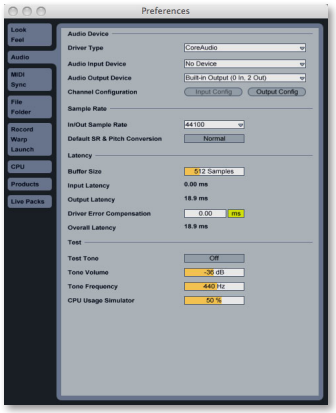
A tip offers suggestions for using the feature being discussed.

Warnings contain important information that can help you avoid possible damage to your equipment, your data, or yourself.

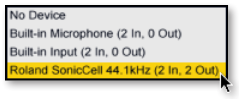
Configuring Live to Work with SonicCell

Setting Up Live for SonicCell Audio

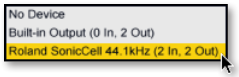
1 From the Live menu, select Preferences... and click Audio along the left edge of the Preferences window to open the Audio tab.



2 From the Audio Input Device popup menu, select Roland SonicCell [SonicCell's current sample rate] (2 In, 2 Out).



3 From the Audio Output Device popup, select Roland SonicCell [SonicCell's current sample rate] (2 In, 2 Out).



Live's sample rate is set by SonicCell. To use another sample rate, close Live's Preferences window, set SonicCell as desired—see the *Using SonicCell with a DAW* Workshop booklet for details—and then repeat Steps 1-3 above.

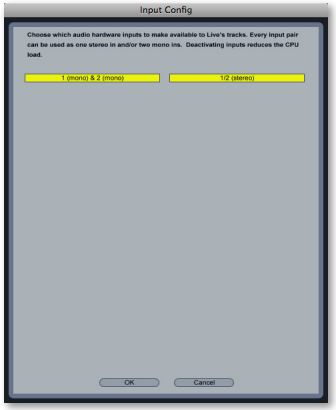
Live has an easy-to-use system for setting the optimal buffer size, a key element in smooth audio-recording operations. To learn about it, see the "Audio I-O" section of Live's built-in Lessons tab.

Turning on the Desired SonicCell Inputs and Outputs

1 In the Audio tab, click the Input Config button.

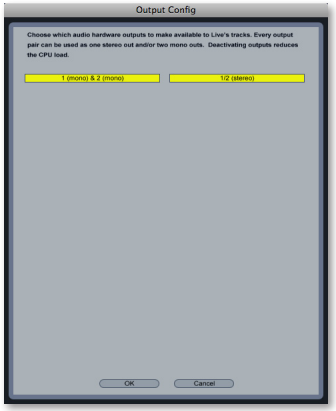
In this window, you turn on or off the desired SonicCell inputs by clicking them. They're shown as single mono inputs on the left, and stereo pairs on the right.

As Live's onscreen text says, the fewer inputs you turn on, the less the strain on your computer, so it makes sense to set this screen up the way you're likely to want to work. (You can always change it later, of course.) The screenshot below shows a sensible starting selection: All of SonicCell's mono input channels are turned on in mono, and all of the stereo inputs are turned on in stereo.


Input Config
Choose which audio hardware inputs to make available to Live's tracks. Every input pair can be used as one stereo in and/or two mono ins. Deactivating inputs reduces the CPU load.
1 (mono) & 2 (mono)
1/2 (stereo)
OK
Cancel

2 Set the Input Config window as desired and click OK.

3 There's usually no need to manually set the output configuration, but you may want to check it by clicking Output Config.

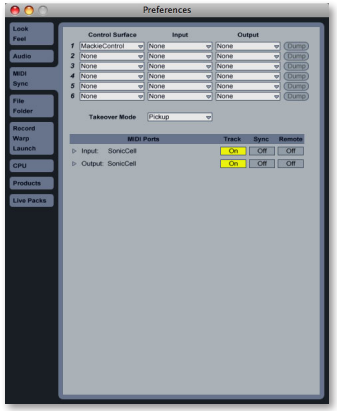

Output Config
Choose which audio hardware outputs to make available to Live's tracks. Every output pair can be used as one stereo out and/or two mono outs. Deactivating outputs reduces the CPU load.
1 (mono) & 2 (mono)
1/2 (stereo)
OK
Cancel

4 If it's not already set as shown above, click whichever box is dark gray to turn both boxes on.

5 Click OK when you're done—but don't close the Preferences window yet. We've got to set up MIDI communication between SonicCell and Live.

Setting Up Live for SonicCell MIDI

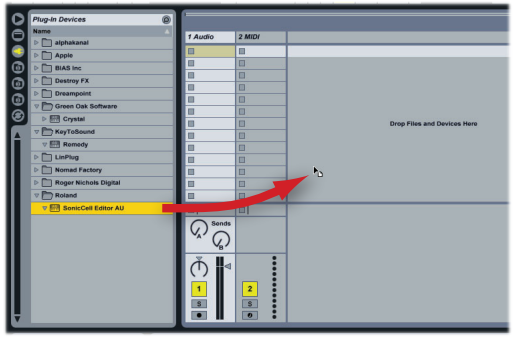
1. In the Preferences window, click the MIDI Sync tab.
2. In the MIDI Ports area, activate
   - *incoming MIDI*—by clicking the input: SonicCell Track button so it lights and reads "On."
   - *outgoing MIDI*—by clicking the Output: SonicCell Track button so it lights and reads "On."



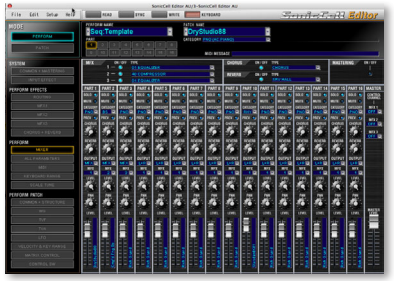
3. Close the Preferences window.

Creating a SonicCell Editor Track

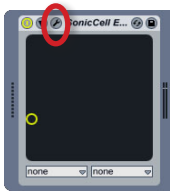
1. In the Session window, open the Live set you want to work on, or create a new one.
2. Click the Plug-In Device Browser to display your installed plug-ins.
3. Open the Roland folder to reveal the SonicCell Editor AU plug-in.
4. Drag the SonicCell Editor AU plug-in to the blank area to the right of any Session View channels you already have, as shown in the following illustration.



After the SonicCell Editor exchanges data with SonicCell, the Editor opens, and a new track is created in the Session View.

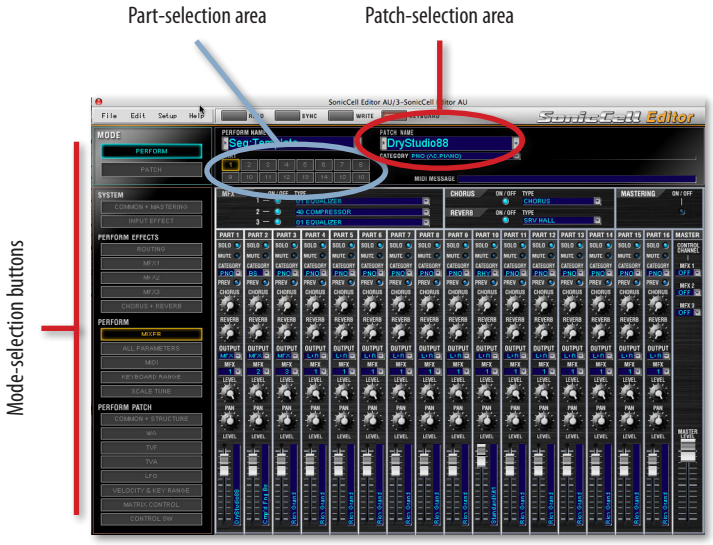


5. To close the Editor, click its close button in the top-left corner of the window.
6. To re-open the Editor, click the newly created SonicCell channel to display the SonicCell Editor device's controls in the Track View. (If you don't see the device, toggle the Track/Clip View display until you do.)
7. Click the control's Plug-In Edit button to open the Editor.



We recommend naming your SonicCell Editor channel so it's easy to grab later on as you work.

Using the SonicCell Editor



You'll find detailed instructions for using the SonicCell Editor in its manual, which you can display by clicking the Help button in the SonicCell Editor window. What follows here are some quick instructions to get you started.

Everything you set up in the SonicCell Editor is automatically saved in your Live project. When you reload the project, the Editor automatically sets up the current performance in SonicCell to match.

Selecting a Patch for a Part

You choose each patch you want to use in Live by selecting it for the part that a Live MIDI track is configured to play. Here's how:

1. Click the part's number in the PARTS area of the Editor window.
2. Select a patch for the part using the controls in the patch-selection area, circled in red above.

To select a patch by:

- *memory location*—click the PATCH NAME parameter's popup arrow to reveal SonicCell's patches organized by their memory locations.
- *category*—click the CATEGORY parameter's popup arrow to reveal SonicCell's patches divided into categories.

You can select performances stored in SonicCell using the PERFORM NAME popup located above the part-selection area.

Digging Deeper

The SonicCell Editor lets you change the current performance's sounds in a range of ways. The mode-selection buttons to the left of the Editor window determine the parameters you see and can edit at any given time. They're divided into the following sections:

- *SYSTEM*—The buttons in this area allow you to set SonicCell's global behavior, and also get quick access to its input effect, a handy thing when you're recording live audio through SonicCell.
- *PERFORM EFFECTS*—These buttons edit the performance's effect setup.
- *PERFORM*—These parameters allow you to control the way each part plays its patch, and lets you add effects to the patch.
- *PERFORM PATCH*—These parameters allow you to dig right inside a part's patch in order to edit it down to its most basic characteristics.

Before using the PERFORM PATCH buttons, be sure to select the part that plays the patch you want to edit. You do this by clicking the part's number in the part-selection area at the top of the window.

Sequencing with SonicCell Patches

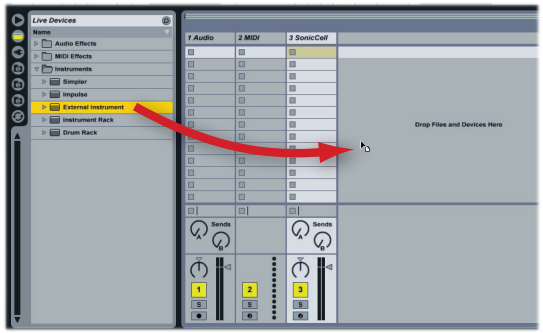
In this section, we'll assume

- *you're using SonicCell in Performance mode*—using SonicCell's PRST 01 Seq: Template performance to start with.
- *you've connected a MIDI controller to SonicCell's MIDI IN jack*—and turned on SonicCell's USB-MIDI THRU System parameter.

1 In the Session window, open the Live set you want to work on, or create a new one.

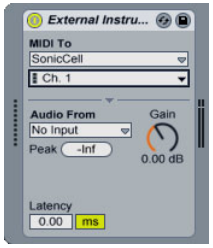
2 Click the Live Device Browser button to display Live's device list.

3 Drag the External Instrument device into the blank area to the right of ant Session View tracks you already have.



4 Live creates and selects a new Session View track for SonicCell, and a SonicCell device appears in the Track View below—this is where you'll set up your MIDI track.

5 In the SonicCell device, set the MIDI To parameter to SonicCell, and select the MIDI channel for the SonicCell part whose patch you want to sequence. Leave the rest of the settings at their default values.



Here we've set up to sequence with Part 1.

If you haven't yet selected a patch on SonicCell to play from this track, use the SonicCell Editor's track to assign the desired patch to the part you want to use. Once you've done that, return to the MIDI track you've been setting up.

6 When you play your controller now, you should hear the desired patch play in SonicCell.

7 Record your SonicCell track as you would any other Live track—when you play it back, you'll hear its SonicCell patch play.

8 Repeat Steps 3-7 for other SonicCell tracks you want to sequence.

At this point, your track is sequenced, and you'll hear it each time you play your project, including when you edit the track. However, the sound is still coming from SonicCell itself—it hasn't yet been recorded as an audio track in Live. We'll get to that in the next section.

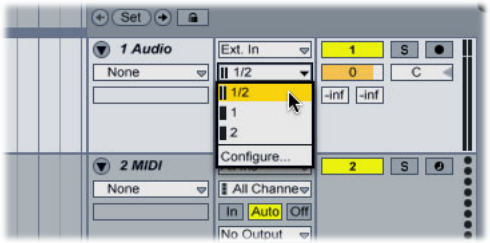
Recording Audio from SonicCell in Live

If you haven't yet read the *Using SonicCell as an Audio Interface* Workshop booklet, read it now before proceeding. SonicCell offers lots of audio-interface options you'll want to know about.

Selecting Audio to Record

1 Open the Live set you want to work on, or create a new one.

2 In the Arrangement view, display the input-selection popup menu by clicking and holding on the input area of the desired track.



3 Select the desired mono or stereo SonicCell input jack or jacks. (In Live, any track can be either mono or stereo—just select the type of input you want to use.) To record

- *a mic or instrument connected to SonicCell's Neutrik input jack*—select 1.
- *a stereo device connected to SonicCell's Neutrik and (LINE) R input jacks*—select 1/2.
- *a SonicCell synth patch in stereo*—select 1/2.

There's no need to configure the track's output unless you have special needs. Each track's output is automatically set to Master, which sends its audio to SonicCell.

Turn Off Software Monitoring

1 Set the track's Monitor section to Off so you're listening to the audio you're recording directly through SonicCell.

As we noted in the *Using SonicCell with a DAW* Workshop booklet, you do have the option of listening through Live if you want to hear its effects as you record—set the Monitor section to Auto or In, as explained in the *Live User Manual*. However, since you may encounter latency doing this, we recommend listening directly through SonicCell.

Before Recording: SonicCell Audio-Recording Strategy

Since SonicCell can simultaneously be the source of synth sounds and your live audio, a little thought needs to be given to making sure you're only recording exactly what you intend to record on any given track.

When you want, for example, to record a single SonicCell synth sound on its own track, you don't want another synth sound or live audio to find its way onto the track. Likewise, if you're recording a vocal or other live audio, you don't want your synths recorded on that same track. Here's what to do.

- *When you want to record a single synth track as a Live audio track*
  - mute any other SonicCell synth tracks you have in the song by temporarily deactivating them in Live, or mute their parts in the SonicCell Editor.
  - If you've connected a mic, instrument, or other device to one of SonicCell's inputs, disconnect it until you're ready to record its audio onto a Live track.
- *When you want to record live audio as a Live audio track, you can use either of two methods:*
  - *If you need to hear your SonicCell synth tracks as you record*—send your live audio through SonicCell's input effect, and then set the TO COM parameter on the In/Out Routing screen to Input FX.
  - *If you don't need to hear SonicCell synth tracks as you record*—mute them in Live by clicking their Mute buttons to light them, or mute their parts in the SonicCell Editor.

Troubleshooting

If you experience problems recording or playing back audio, Live's built-in owner's manual can provide insights that can help you solve your problem. See Chapter 25, "Computer Resources and Strategies." In addition, raising the Audio Buffer size in SonicCell's control panel may also help, though it may also increase latency if you're working with soft synths in Live.

The End

We hope you've found this workshop helpful. Keep an eye out for other SonicCell Workshop booklets available for downloading at *www.RolandUS.com*.